



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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Commissioner of Education  
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July 15, 2019

Dear Chancellor Rosa and Honorable Members of the Board of Regents:

I am writing to notify you that I will resign from my post as Commissioner for the New York State Education Department (NYSED) on August 31, 2019. It has been my great pleasure and honor to serve the students and teachers of New York over the last four years as we work to advance equity and excellence in our education system.

Together with the Governor, State Legislature and distinguished Board of Regents, I am proud of our department's work to reform school accountability and improvement programs; offer improved professional development for our dedicated team of educators; and build an inclusive and responsive education system that is reflective of our diverse and vibrant student population.

During my tenure, we were guided by our goal to close the opportunity gap in all districts across the state, most recently with the development and implementation of the \$1.6 billion Every Student Succeeds State plan in January 2018. This vital and comprehensive set of reforms helped to boost educational equity and put in place a new, more dynamic school improvement process that requires staff, parent and student involvement. New York was also the first state to accept the landmark My Brother's Keeper initiative into law, in an effort to ensure all boys and young men of color in school are on a track for success.

In line with this agenda, we took targeted steps to help address the individual needs of unique and vulnerable student populations, from children with learning difficulties to students experiencing homelessness to English Language Learners and immigrant communities. By promoting a culturally-responsive and well-rounded education with additional support systems, we made academic and social-emotional development for every child a top priority.

We also identified the State's most challenging schools and districts—its urban centers—and developed case by case solutions. In Rochester, for example, we deployed a Distinguished Educator to assess why the district had been failing students for years and used that report as a basis for the development of the District's plan to support students to success. Similarly, in New York City, we established a comprehensive Corrective Action Plan that set forth system-wide reforms specifically targeted at improving services for students with disabilities, English Language Learners and their families.

NYSED championed efforts to improve educational opportunities outside of the traditional classroom setting by working closely with colleagues in the State Departments of Health, Children Services, Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, and Alcoholism and Substance Abuse. We also partnered with higher education institutions, with a focus on strengthening access to colleges and universities for all students and preparing them for life after high school. Our approach centered on addressing teacher shortages, strengthening student teaching requirements, and creating a pilot principal preparation program.

As a former teacher, administrator, and superintendent, I have devoted my entire 45-year career to putting children on a path to success both in school and beyond, and I am enormously grateful for the opportunity to lead the school system here in New York State. Going forward, I hope to translate the experiences I've gained from one of the largest, most complex education systems in the country into lessons to help improve classrooms, schools, and districts for students in every state.

Thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "MaryEllen Elia". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline.

MaryEllen Elia  
Commissioner  
New York State Education Department